

Sorting Mini Lop Litters By Bryan Shirk

One of the most difficult aspects of raising rabbits of any breed is sorting out litters into “keeps” and “culls.” To a fairly new breeder this is exceptionally difficult as every kit seems to have the cute factor, making it difficult to want to get rid of any of them. However, in breeding rabbits the more critical you can be on your herd the stronger your herd will become down the road. Each experienced breeder has their own way of selecting offspring for show and for the meat buyer. I’m going to explain some of the basics I use on my Mini Lop offspring at different ages of development.

Personally, the very first cull happens right at birth. Mini Lops can have varying sizes of litters. The biggest I’ve seen was fourteen, which was my own doe’s kindling. I had to cull that litter down after fostering three to a doe with a smaller litter; I then did away with the smallest three left. I try to keep my does to raising no more than seven or eight babies. Culling out the smaller kits will allow for more mass develop within your herd. Although, culling at birth is not really necessary if you have an average size litter. You want them to be able to use each other for warmth.

I allow the babies to grow up to six weeks before I do my next round of culling. Judging type is usually difficult on such a young animal that I ignore that part of the body for this round of culling. Yet, I look directly at two very noticeable parts: head and bone. After culling these two parts from your litter you will be left with usually two to three offspring to grow out; a more manageable number for small rabbitries.

When flipping the young Mini Lop over, the hind foot should be almost as thick as they are long at this age. The thick bone is a must in the breed and we want to make sure we are carrying those traits through our herds from the very beginning. A fine boned animal is an undesirable trait and needs to be removed from the gene pool to allow for the heavy boned animals to pass on the trait with no interference.

Looking at the head on a young Mini Lop seems like a hard decision to make at this age, but it actually tends to be easy after developing a eye for your lines. I always look at the brow (forehead) and between the lower parts of the eyes. If you have a long, narrow forehead, that would be an immediate cull for me. You want a short, thick skull on the animal to allow for a nice bold structure with nice curvature. When looking between the lower parts of the eyes you want to see if the width is as thick as the brow. If the width is not there this means the animal will more than likely have an hour glass structure to his head. A trait you do not want to see in any Mini Lop in your breeding program.

The final cull before adulthood happens at 12-14 weeks in my barn. At this age, when properly posed, you can judge the type of the animal. Look for short, thick, well balanced shoulders coming off from the strong head we have already previously culled for in the group. Make sure the animal is short in type with enough balance to properly peak right at the top of the hip and rounds down into a nice full, wide, well covered hindquarter. Feel and look to make sure the loin is full with enough width to balance with the amount of depth the animal is carrying. Type is important in Mini Lops so if you are unsure of yourself always feel free to ask an experienced breeder who has reputation of constant quality Mini Lops.

Never be unsure of yourself when culling. Make sure you speak to multiple breeders and look at their rabbits for a visual comparison. Most breeders are happy to help any new comers into the hobby. Stay away from color projects on Mini Lops until you have established your herd in strong genetics. Getting into the “fun” colors in the very beginning is asking for a rough road when breeding Mini Lops.

Most importantly, remember why you chose the breed Mini Lops. Beautiful animals, fun people and a passion you share with friends. Never become discouraged and always ask for help. You are never alone in this hobby as you have an entire rabbit family that will always be there to support you.



The photo on the left displays a fair/poor head on a six week old Mini Lop. Notice the lower part of the eye just above the nose. The width begins to taper in and the muzzle is weak.

The photo on the right is a strong Mini Lop head.



The photo on the left shows poor bone on a young Mini Lop. The length is considerable larger compared to the width of the hind foot.

On the right we see a short thick foot displaying beautiful bone.